REMARKS

Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

I. Status of the Claims

Claims 1 and 7 have been amended and no new matter has been added.

Claims 5 and 6 were canceled without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter therein.

Claims 8 to 10 have been withdrawn from further consideration by the Examiner as being drawn to a non- elected invention along with response to the election requirement.

Claims 11 to 14 have been added and no new matter is added. Support for the amendment is in the Specification on page 10, lines 4 to 7 and 11 to 13.

Claims 1-4, 7, and 11-14 are pending.

II. Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,134,929 to Maeyama et al. ("Maeyama") in view of Japanese Patent Publication No. 2001-342981 ("JP '981"). Applicant attaches hereto an English language translation of JP '981 as generated from the Japanese Patent Office Web Site on July 12, 2006, as Exhibit A. Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection.

Claim 1 has been amended to recite that the nitrided layer "has a thickness in a range from 2 to 5 μm." The thickness of 2 μm of the nitrided layer has been found in the present invention to be the lower limit to obtain sufficient wear resistance and friction performance, and the thickness of 5

μm of the nitrided layer has been found in the present invention to be the upper limit to prevent deterioration of tenacity. Accordingly, the integrated sprocket and housing of the present invention has both sufficient surface hardness and sufficient tenacity.

In contrast, JP '981 discloses that a thickness of the nitrogen-diffused layer 21 should not be less than 0.05 mm and that the wear resistance of the nitrogen-diffused layer 21 is stabilized by forming the nitrogen-diffused layer 21 larger than 0.05 mm in thickness; Exhibit A, page 9, paragraph [0033], last sentence and page 10, paragraph [0036] lines 3 to 5).

Thus, JP '981 only teaches and suggests that the thickness of the nitrogen-diffused layer 21 is not less than 0.05 mm. A thickness of 0.05 mm is 10 times larger than 5 μm, thus one of ordinary skill in the art is taught away from reducing the thickness of JP '981's nitrogen-diffused layer. The thickness range from 2 to 5 μm is not disclosed or suggested in Maeyama or JP '981. Thus, an integrated sprocket and housing having a nitrided layer between is 2 to 5 μm in thickness is not obvious or anticipated from the combination of the cited references. Applicants respectfully request that the rejection be withdrawn.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number indicated below once he has reviewed the proposed amendment if the Examiner believes any issue can be resolved through either a Supplemental Response or an Examiner's Amendment.

Dated: July 11, 2006

Respectfully submitted,

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